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TACTICS

Regional Report on existing Domestic
Violence Response System between police
and professionals

Romania

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Overview of existing domestic violence response system for multi-agency collaboration

To collect data for this first part of the report and to obtain an overall understanding of indicators in the context of domestic violence, the research team conducted several activities. Data was initially collected through desk research, searching for available statistics and information, at both national and county level. Keywords were used for the initial search, corresponding with the requested data and indicators, such as: "domestic violence cases", "national", "Cluj-Napoca", "Cluj County", "bail conditions", "average time of response", "police training", etc. The research team tried to gather data for the years 2022 and 2023.

As limited information was found by this inquiry, most of the data was found in media reports. Afterwards, we continued to search and gather data from official websites of institutions with an active role domestic violence prevention and control. The research team covered:

The official online platform of Cluj County Police Inspectorate [Inspectoratul de Poliție Județean Cluj - I.P.J. Cluj], where year-by-year activity reports are published;

The official website of the Romanian Police [Inspectoratul General al Poliției Române - I.G.P.R.], which in addition to their yearly activity reports, provides monthly news for police officers on domestic violence at national level;

Activity reports of the National Agency for Gender Equality between Women and Men [Agenția Națională pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați - ANES]. This is the main institution within the central public administration, being subordinated to the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Equality of Opportunities, with legal personality and responsibility to develop, coordinate, and implement government strategies and policies in the field of gender equality and treatment between women and men, as well as for prevention and control of domestic violence, discrimination and human trafficking;

The National Institute of Statistics [Institutul Național de Statistică - INSSE];

Reports of non-governmental organisations that play an active role in gender-based violence and domestic violence.

Following this activity, there was a notable distinction between the activity reports provided by the Romanian Police and the information from their official website, in the "News and Media" section. There exists a monthly report titled "Domestic Violence, In Attention to Police Officers" that is released year by year and that gives extensive data for the national level. Unfortunately, the national police press does not offer a yearly overview for domestic violence indicators for the entire year. For instance, last available data reflects the statistics for the first 11 months of the years 2022 and 2023, and in January statistics start with the first month of the new year. Also, there are inconsistencies between data provided by the activity report from the county level police department and the Romanian Police. Where we could not find any published data, we requested the missing information from the Cluj County Police Inspectorate (I.P.J. Cluj), corroborated with data resulted from the interviews, wherever

possible. National legislation related to risk evaluation and management of domestic violence cases unfolded by the police authorities were also investigated for this report.

All sources used throughout this report were made available in the “References” section. Additional materials were presented in the Appendices as follows:

- Appendix 1 includes the interview guides used to collect qualitative data, and the ethics approval from the Ethics Committee of Babeş-Bolyai University.
- Appendix 2 contains a copy of Order no. 146/2578/2018 which related to domestic violence case management by the police, the risk assessment tool police officers use when responding to cases, and the 2022 activity reports of the Romanian Police and of the National Agency for Gender Equality between Women and Men.
- Appendix 3 includes the activity report of the Cluj County Police Inspectorate for the year 2022.

Indicators

- i. Proportion of domestic violence cases reported to the police that are investigated and prosecuted

When complaints related to different forms of domestic violence under the Criminal Code are filed, a single criminal investigation case file is registered against the perpetrator. This does not happen in cases in which the victim opts out of pursuing this procedure (information provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate).

- ii. Proportion of survivors of domestic violence who report improved satisfaction with quality and safety of police services

To our best knowledge, there is no procedure to officially collect data on the quality and safety of police services. The police structures from the county level do not centralize such data (information provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate). No available data could be found at national level about this indicator.

- iii. Proportion of survivors of domestic violence using police services

We were unable to determine the proportion of victims who used police services. However, we can share the total number of victims based on the latest data provided by Romanian Police for the first 11 months of 2023. According to the press release from their official website, a total number of 55.429 victims for the reported criminal acts, were registered at the national level during this period (I.G.P.R., 2023).

Data

i. Police use of risk assessment tools

At national level, Order no. 146/2578/2018 regulates the management of domestic violence cases by the police. This order contains a risk assessment form that police officers complete at the place of an incident. The risk assessment form has two sections: the first part consists in a questionnaire with close-ended questions addressed to the victim, continued with a police ascertainment section, which can be useful if the case is reported in court. However, the release of the temporary protection order is based on the victim's answers at the risk assessment form (Order provided in Appendix 2).

ii. Police use of case management flowcharts/maps/diagrams

In cases where a temporary protection order is issued, the procedures for handling domestic violence cases by police officers follow the guidelines outlined in Order no. 146/2578/2018. This order addresses and provides step by step instructions on the intervention protocol of police and collaboration with other institutions responsible for domestic violence case management, the methodology for using the risk assessment form, as well as the procedures for issuing and executing a temporary protection order (Order provided in Appendix 2).

iii. Police number of referrals to victim services

Depending on police officer's findings about the victim's needs, they refer them to specialised social services, but there is no systematic collection of this data (information provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate). We were unable to find a document providing information regarding referrals from the police to victim services at national level as well.

iv. Police number of referrals to perpetrator services

Perpetrators are referred to social services by police officers when issuing a temporary protection order, and if necessary. Police officers provide recommendations to perpetrators, but they do not have a mandatory role, as the courts are the ones who make this decision (information provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate). Perpetrator services are limited, as in the 2022 activity report provided by the National Agency for Gender Equality between Women and Men is specified that 8 support centres for perpetrators of domestic violence were established and financed through a project called "Support for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Romania" at the national level. These centres operate within the General Directorate of Social Work and Child Protection (DGASPC) in Dolj, Ialomița, Timiș,

Constanța, Bacău, Sibiu, Giurgiu counties, and one in the capital Bucharest. According to the report, 91 beneficiaries were recorded across all 8 centres, out of which 12 were female and 79 were male (ANES activity report provided in Appendix 2).

v. Police number of referrals to other services, e.g. social workers

The police structures from the county level do not centralize such data (information provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate). No available information could be found at national level about this indicator.

vi. Police ability to share data on victims and perpetrators with other professionals

Data is shared between police officers and social workers/psychologists working on the cases, and other professionals when needed, e.g. medical doctors, forensics, support services. The exchange of information with the police during the case management of domestic violence situations is rapid and efficient. The working methods used for data sharing are face-to-face case management conferences, taking place at the headquarters of the organization/police/support services, online meetings on WhatsApp, communication by telephone or e-mails. As there is no electronic registry for documenting cases of violence, there interactions are coordinated and happening at local level.

vii. Other relevant data:

- Number of victims reporting being a victim of domestic violence to police services in your country or setting; if possible, data should be disaggregated by sex, age group, nationality, etc. to collect info on key special needs groups targeted.

In the last press release of the Romanian Police for the first 11 months of 2023, a total of 55.429 victims were reported, for criminal acts. Data were detailed only by gender and age. Most of these victims were women, 37.408, followed by 9.951 men and 8.070 minors (I.G.P.R., 2023).

- Number of police-recorded crime of a domestic violence case in 2022

At the national level, for the first 11 months of 2022, the press release report entitled “Domestic Violence, In Attention to Police Officers”, available on the Romanian police website, at the “News and Media” section, recorded a total of 50.531 criminal acts of domestic

violence. Among these, the most common acts included “assault or other acts of violence”, 31.310, followed by 6.058 “threats” and 5.148 cases of “family abandonment” (I.G.P.R., 2022).

According to the activity report of Cluj County Police Inspectorate, regarding the prevention and combating criminality associated with domestic violence, 1.227 incidents were reported in 2022. Out of these incidents, 806 cases involved offences such as “assault or other acts of violence”, 114 were cases of “family abandonment”, and 111 were “threats” (I.P.J. Cluj activity report provided in Appendix 3).

- Peak times for calls to police relating to domestic violence

The peak time for calls in which incidents of domestic violence are reported, falls within the 18:00 to 06:00 time frame (data provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate).

- Number of speciality trained police officers in conducting investigation of domestic violence cases in your country or setting

Regarding this aspect, all police officers in public order structures, both agents and officers, are authorised to handle cases of domestic violence they come in contact with. In addition, some of the police officers in the Criminal Investigation structures also have this authority (data provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate).

- Number of bail conditions for perpetrators of domestic violence in order to protect victims

We are not aware of any information regarding bail conditions for perpetrators of domestic violence at national level, as the desk research did not reveal any.

- Number of victims that withdraw their case from police

Regarding this matter, the police structures from the county level do not centralize such data (information provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate). This type of data could not be found at national level during desk research.

- Number of domestic violence protection orders granted (if applicable in your country/setting)

At the national level, for 2022, police data did not provide the total number of protection orders. The only available data covered the first 11 months of both 2022 and 2023. For 2022, the Romanian Police reported that the courts issued 10.193 protection orders, out of which 4.718 originated from the temporary protection orders (I.G.P.R., 2022). The numbers

increased for the same period of 2023, at a level of 11.012 protection orders, of which 4.962 originated from temporary protection orders (I.G.P.R., 2023).

In Cluj county, there were 287 protection orders issued in 2022 (I.P.J. Cluj activity report provided in Appendix 3). Data was not available for the year 2023.

- Number of referrals to other resources such as health, social and legal services

The National Agency for Gender Equality compiles national and county-level information about domestic violence victims who received social services. The data comes from reports submitted to the agency by the General Directorates for Social Work and Child Protection (DGASPC), based on information provided by various institutions and organisations involved in addressing domestic violence, at county level and in the sectors of Bucharest Municipality. This data does not specify who refers victims to the DGASPC, but only what support services were provided to survivors of violence. According to data from the National Institute of statistics, in 2022, the total number of victims that benefited from social services was 12.940 at the national level and 508 in Cluj County. The table below presents additional information for the year 2022, highlighting the type of services provided and the corresponding number of beneficiaries, both at the national and county level (INSSE, n.d.).

Type of service provided	National level Cluj County level	
	Total number of victims	
	12.940*	508*
Primary counselling	9.241	422
Social counselling	8.203	386
Psychological counselling	7.548	336
Legal counselling	3.253	286
Mediation	2.267	4

Legal representation (in court)	466	12
Social assistance	5.167	238
Medical assistance and care	1.647	167
Reimbursement of forensic medical certificate	120	28
Shelter	2.790	170
Other social protection measures	1.949	171

*** One person can receive multiple types of services, which is why the total number of victims per type of service is higher than the total number of beneficiaries.**

- Number of multi-agency risk assessment conferences held in 2022 for police and partner organisations to discuss high-risk domestic violence cases

Even though we could not find the exact number of case conferences, neither at local nor national level, the Police Inspectorate of Cluj County reported that at local level there is a multi-sectorial group that meets occasionally. The meetings take place usually to discuss and address complex cases of domestic violence and abuse. The police structures from the county level do not centralize such data (information provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate).

- Use of question prompts or checklists to help police handling of domestic violence calls to police, for example make sure police staff allocate the case to specialist teams when involving vulnerable people

There is no checklist to guide police officers handling the domestic violence calls. According to legislation, a mobile team, made of a police officer and a social worker should go at the place of an incident for the risk assessment, independently on the level of vulnerability.

In cases of imminent risk, with the approval of victims and where the services are available, police officers accompany victims at the protected shelters, and cooperates with the specialists from these services during the case management.

- Use of risk assessment tools or guidelines, if yes please provide a copy of the tool or guideline

In Romania, there exists a risk assessment form that is used by police officers at every complain at the place of a domestic violence incident. It is provided in the Appendix 2.

- Number of repeat callers to police as victims of domestic violence

At county level, even if such cases exist, they are numerically limited and mainly involve individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Additionally, the victims often refuse to ask for a temporary protection order against the perpetrator, or they do not wish to report the incident to the court for the release of a protection order. After the court is notified, many of victims choose to withdraw from the legal procedure (data provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate).

This information was not available at the national level. However, some data was identified through the HELPLINE managed by the National Agency for Gender Equality between Women and Men in Romania. It is a free 24/7 telephone line, with a nationwide unique number, dedicated to victims of domestic violence, gender-based discrimination and human trafficking. Report data for 2023 showed that out of the total 9.490 calls received, 6.279 were answered, 2.599 were short ones and 612 were missed calls. Among the 6.279 answered calls, 2.917 of them were related to domestic violence. This number also included callbacks, but the exact number is not specified. However, it seems that during these calls of reporting domestic violence situations, 2.115 users were identified as “victims”, 653 as “witnesses” and 149 as “other person”. During a call, multiple types of violence were usually reported, but the most frequent ones, 2.047, were incidents of verbal violence, 2.000 incidents of psychological violence and 1.662 of physical violence (ANES, 2024).

- Supervision provided to police officers handling domestic abuse calls, e.g., supervisors reviewing call logs to make sure all relevant information had been recorded, listening to calls as they happened, and giving call handlers individual feedback

The Cluj County Police Inspectorate mentioned that during the year 2023, they handled a total of 27.813 interventions, as a response to calls directed to them through the National Emergency Service for Ambulance and Emergency Receiving Unit (112). Out of these interventions, 1.758 represented cases involving a form of domestic violence. It is important

to note that operators at the Operational Center of the Cluj County Police Inspectorate handle the entire range of calls made through the National Emergency Call System (112) and are trained to request relevant information in cases of domestic violence. Additionally, within the Operational Center at the Cluj County Police Inspectorate, there is a police officer who serves the role of supervision and guidance in cases that prove to be more complex and subsequently undergo analysis (data provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate).

At the national level, no document addressing this data was available during the desk research.

- Average time for police to respond on site to a case of domestic violence

At the Cluj county level, out of the total interventions to events that were directed to the police through the National Emergency Call System (112), 19.889 were carried out within a 10-minute time interval. These statistics included all interventions of police officers and were not limited only to cases of domestic violence (data provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate).

No national-level document containing this type of data was available during desk research.

- Number of police staff receiving training and professional development on responding to domestic violence cases based on case examples including victim and perpetrator feedback and information on:
 - a) responding effectively to breaches of orders and bail;
 - b) coercive and controlling behaviour, such as perpetrator tactics for keeping victims in relationships and perpetrator manipulation of police responders;
 - c) taking allegations of domestic violence seriously;
 - d) understanding how the evidence gathered by police in domestic violence cases is used in court;
 - e) victim and perpetrator questioning techniques;
 - f) information on support organisations for victims and for perpetrators
 - g) understanding for why victims frequently minimise or downplay the extent of the abuse when police arrive on site due to coercive control by the perpetrator on the victim and perpetrators present themselves as wronged

According to the Cluj County Police Inspectorate, police officers within this institution undergo regular professional assessments, evaluation, including domestic violence and abuse as a topic. Additionally, police officers from the Public Order and Criminal Investigations Services, participated in training sessions regarding the electronic monitoring system of perpetrators. According to the Decision of the Romanian Government No. 1025, from 10 August 2022, for establishing the technical and organisational aspects in regard to the functioning of the pilot system, as well as those related to the operationalization of the Electronic Monitoring Information System (E.M.I.S.), starting from January 1, 2024, at 00:00 the system became operational at the administrative-territorial units of Cluj County. In this regard, at the Cluj County Police Inspectorate (I.P.J. Cluj), the E.M.I.S. Dispatch Center has been operational, operating 24/7, with responsibilities for managing cases of domestic violence concerning the transmission, recording, implementation, and documentation tracking in the resolution process, activation of surveillance devices, and monitoring the compliance with measures stipulated in these documents (data provided by Cluj County Police Inspectorate).

The activity report of Romanian Police for the year 2022 did not provide any information about the training of police officers in the field of domestic violence. However, some details regarding such training were found in the 2022 activity report of The National Agency for Gender Equality between Women and Men (ANES). The institution received funding for several projects, and within these projects, some initiatives were launched to provide training courses to law enforcement agencies and other professionals working with cases of domestic violence, as follows:

- “Support for the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Romania” project funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. The main objective of this project was to support the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Romania, aiming to reduce domestic violence and violence against women. It was designed to facilitate the exchange of good practices with relevant and experienced Norwegian institutions in this field. As part of the activities, training courses were organised for law enforcement and professionals from the judicial system, in order to enhance inter-institutional intervention methods. The report specified that there were 10 training sessions held for a total of 222 professionals, with the purpose of increasing the legislative knowledge on domestic violence. In addition, 2 training sessions were conducted for judges, prosecutors and police officers, focusing on cases involving Roma population.
- “VioGen - RoJust” project, implemented in partnership with other non-governmental organisations, started in December 2021 and financed through the European Economy Area (EEA) Grants. The project aimed to build capacity for Romanian authorities, in order to implement decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and country recommendations from the Council of Europe in the areas of domestic violence, abuse and gender-based violence. It was reported that more than 700 police officers were trained during this project so far (ANES activity report provided in Appendix 2).

Overview of Advisory Groups performed

a. Mode: online or in person / focus group or interviews / duration

A total of 21 interviews were carried out in Romania, 13 were realized face-to-face, at the headquarters of the partner institutions (Cluj county Probation Office – with the two perpetrators; a public protected shelter – with two victims; the Office for Crime Analysis and Prevention – with 5 police officers; DASM (Directorate for Social and Medical Assistance – Direcția de Asistență Socială și Medicală of Cluj-Napoca municipality) and DGASPC – one social worker from each institution; Pediatric Emergency Department and General Emergency Department of the Cluj County Hospital – one social worker from each department). The other 8 interviews were carried out online, using the Microsoft Teams platform. Twenty of them were individual interviews and one interview was conducted with two police officers working in the same service.

The interviews had different durations, ranging from 12 minutes (for example with one perpetrator and one victim) to 50 minutes (some of the interviews with different professionals who work in the non-governmental organizations).

b. Number of participants by gender

Among the interviewed persons from the four advisory groups, 15 were women and 7 were men (2 perpetrators, 3 police officers, and 2 social workers from the Emergency Departments).

Summary of Victim Advisory Group

A total of 4 interviews were conducted with representatives of victim support services (N=2) and victims of domestic violence (N=2). Two interviews were conducted with workers from a protected shelter for victims of domestic violence, in Câmpia Turzii, a small town of Cluj county, 30 km from Cluj-Napoca. They were interviewed separately, online, using the Microsoft Teams platform. The interviews with the two victims, residents in another protected shelter, were conducted in person, separately, at the location of the institution, located in a big metropolitan area of Cluj-Napoca town. Both shelters are subordinated to the General Directorate of Social Work and Child Protection of Cluj [Direcția Generală de Asistență Socială și Protecția Copilului – DGASPC].

What works well

Interinstitutional collaboration

The professionals from the victim support services noticed a consistent improvement of the immediate/ crisis intervention in the cases of domestic violence against women at the level of interinstitutional cooperation in the last years. For instance, the admission of a victim with children in a public shelter with a secret location, can be done immediately and rapidly, right at the door of the institution, with the direct help of the police officer from the victim's place of residence (**V1, psychologist, lines 5-9; 11-21**). In the past, the process was more complicated, and an evaluation of a multidisciplinary team from the department of domestic violence of DGASPC was mandatory before the acceptance in the shelter (**V1, psychologist, lines 9-11**). At present, many victims, including those who do not have a temporary protection order, are accepted in the shelter based on the written report of the police officer (**V2, social worker, lines 20-23**).

Police officers closely cooperate with the professionals from the protected shelters to fulfil the compulsory preconditions for the admission of victims. In this process, police officers inform the victim about the strict rules that must be respected once she becomes a resident. One of the most important and most difficult to abide is to cease any contact with the perpetrator and with all members of her family, for safety reasons (**V2, social worker, lines 38-42**).

Police authorities also help the shelter residents after their admission, for instance when a beneficiary has failed to retrieve her and her children's identity documents and clothing from the hastily abandoned home (**V1, psychologist, lines 21-25**).

There is a continuity of Police support after the admission of a victim in a protected shelter. For those victims who make a complaint in court to extend the temporary protection order, the police officers either come at the shelter, or accompany them at the police station or in the court for the hearing sessions (**V1, psychologist, lines 70-74**).

In the last years, there is a close interinstitutional collaboration for gender-based violence prevention. Local authorities – Police, DASM, DGASPC – and NGOs work together to raise the awareness at the community level. Such activities are carried out in high schools, where adolescents learn how to identify violence and its typology. Besides, every year, the local authorities and the NGOs organize the 16 days of activism against domestic violence (in the year 2023, between 24 November and 10 December). During this period, different activities are unfolded to inform the large public on this phenomenon and to promote the reduction and control of violence (**V1, psychologist, lines 135-142**).

Resources for the victims

In Romania, The National Agency for Equality of Chances between Women and Men [Agenția Națională pentru Egalitatea de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați – ANES, <https://anes.gov.ro/>] provides a permanent helpline with a unique national number for victims of domestic violence, gender discrimination and human trafficking. Based on a call,

the experts provide support and advice, and can guide and refer the victims who use this service to the responsible authorities at the county level **(V1, psychologist, lines 35-37)**.

In some cases, victims alone search on the internet and find information about social and support services, and what to do in case of a violent incident in their family.

Degree of satisfaction of the victims about the interactions with police authorities

The level of satisfaction about the intervention and role of police in the management of domestic violence cases varies among the professionals and victims. According to professionals from shelters, in the last years, the beneficiaries claimed to be satisfied or very satisfied about their interactions with police authorities **(V1, psychologist, line 77)**. This perception can be explained by a more appropriate intervention of police officers in the urban areas, where these shelters are located. The following case was considered by the professionals from the shelter a successful collaboration with the police authorities:

*We had an adult mother and daughter, 45 and almost 60 years respectively. Both ran from the (same) aggressor, who was the husband and father respectively ... They were brought by the police. Later, it was possible that the father would be committed to a psychiatric institution, given the fact that he caused a lot of destruction after the women left (from home). ... Beyond violence, he also had other manifestations. The police, at least once a week, called the shelter to check on the women's state, ... even though we told them from the beginning that we could extend their stay as long as needed. The women felt so supported, as they were informed in real time of the status of the process, what is next, what the (court) will decide, whether the man will be locked up in a psychiatric institution or not, what options they have and, together with the police, we weighed each option **(V1, psychologist, lines 97-105)**.*

What are challenges

The strongest barrier in stopping the circle of violence against women at the individual/ microsystem level, is of a psychological nature, explained by the victim's emotional and economic dependence on the perpetrator **(V1, psychologist, lines 62-66; 70-72; V4, lines 37-38; 79-80)**.

Another barrier is cultural and structural in nature. These factors relate to the "unwritten rules, habits and taken-for-granted assumptions of a culture", leading to "stereotypes and other discriminatory distortions", and explain how certain persons "can be disadvantaged by their place in society in terms of gender", socio-economic status or other characteristics (Thompson, 2009: 144). However, in recent years, probably due to an

increased awareness through the media, the situation has improved, and there is a more adequate response to violence in the society **(V1, psychologist, lines 81-92; 107-109)**.

In the Romanian context, the police response to cases of domestic violence differs depending on the victim's area of residence. In the big cities, like Cluj-Napoca, the police officers rigorously and immediately apply the legal procedures in cases of emergency: the application of the temporary protection order; informing victims about their rights; removing the abuser from home in case of an imminent risk of violence; or accompanying victims to protected shelter, or other institutions based on the needs (e.g. Forensic Institute – Institutul de Medicină Legală – IML, the court, the police station, etc.). However, in the small communities from rural areas, the local police officers are often caught in between the familial conflict, and often try to reconcile the two parts:

*In cases where the influences of the community are too strong, the police representatives are somehow in the middle and somehow try to reconcile both the goat and the cabbage – the victim, but also the community and the aggressor he may know –, and try to reconcile them. But now there are fewer and fewer cases **(V2, social worker in a protected shelter for victims, lines 6-10)**.*

Also, in the villages and small towns, in some cases, victims feel offended about how police officers treat them. In other cases, victims avoid asking for the police intervention, either because they are afraid that something bad will happen to them, or because they do not want to harm the perpetrator, even if the release of a temporary protection order does not entail the imprisoning of the perpetrator **(V2, social worker, lines 56-60)**.

For the interviewed victims, who lived in a rural area when they were abused by their partner, the interactions with local police officers was perceived as negative. Their dissatisfaction had different reasons: it seemed for them that local police repeatedly minimized the gravity of the abusive behavior of the perpetrator; they felt police officers disregarded their feelings of fear and helplessness when the perpetrator abused them and that their response was too slow and underestimated the situation; the temporary protection order was released only after many complaints and when the situation of victims became critical; and they felt disappointed by the police attitudes, who either judged them, or gave them inappropriate advices. The following quotations reflect some of the police officers' messages and actions the victims exemplified:

*Leave him alone, it will pass, ignore him, don't let him come here ... **(V3, lines 15-16)**.*

Only when he grabbed me by the neck and left marks on me, then they get me a temporary protection order ... (This) 3rd time, when the police came, I argued with them, because I told them: How can such a thing be possible, that is, only

when you see a dead person do you come to take the necessary steps? Because I could be dead until they came (V4, lines 60-61, 67-69).

Well, why are you staying with him? Why don't you go do this? Why? (V4, lines 155-156).

A challenge that hinders the efficient intervention of police authorities is the uncertain behavior of victims after the release of a temporary protection order. Quite often, under different reasons, the victim returns to the perpetrator, renouncing complaints and thus thwarting the efforts to combat violence. This pattern usually repeats, so that the victim enters in a circle of violence, that becomes very difficult to break (V4, lines 72-74). Consequently, the victim might easily lose her credibility and can be treated with suspicion and superficiality by police authorities at the subsequent complaints.

Unfortunately, there are also victims who call the police many times, after that they return, cancel their complaints. Uhh, they give work to the police representatives and then the reaction of the representatives is unhappy, that they challenge them; (then, they) said, that “you are insecure, you are guilty”, something like this; there are few cases like that (V2, social worker in a protected shelter for victims, lines 10-13).

Another challenge in the case management of domestic violence is the scarcity of services for perpetrators. The professionals from victim support services stressed that there is a great need to develop such services, especially residential centres who can provide accommodation when they are removed from home and psychological counseling programs for the rehabilitation of perpetrators (V2, social worker, lines 91-93). At present, in most cases, police officers find it challenging to relocate perpetrators from their current living arrangements, due to the lack of accommodation. In the rural areas, it is even more difficult to find social services for victims or perpetrators.

In the opinion of the professionals who work with victims, a burden for the police officers in the risk assessment at an incident of domestic violence is the need to play the role of the psychologist or social worker when they interact with the victim, perpetrator, and with children affected by violence. This happens when the “mobile team” cannot go in the field. This structure which should intervene immediately, as mandated by law, doesn't work because of the insufficient resources, both human and material, mostly (V2, social worker, lines 80-82; 88-91).

Recommendations for improvement

According to the actual legislation, police officers have the right to remove the perpetrator from home, even if he is the owner, when there is an imminent risk of violence for the victim(s); however, when implemented, this measure exposes the victim(s) at an

increased vulnerability, as the perpetrator can become more aggressive when he returns in the household; in many situations, his return even violates the protection order. To avoid such a risk, police authorities prefer to remove the victim and the children from home and bring them to a protected shelter. The opinion of a representative of victim support services is that the police officer should imprison a perpetrator who breaks the protection order. In the actual practice of police, the perpetrator who does not respect the protection order is taken to the police station, where he is counseled for an hour or two, and after that he is released and returns in the family, often reacting even more aggressively against the victim(s) **(V1, psychologist, lines 109-115; 118-123)**.

In the view of the professionals working from protected shelters, police authorities should encourage in a greater extent the victims to ask for the temporary protection order for 5 days and then for its extension for a period of 6 months in court. An important improvement of police intervention in this process should be to accompany the victim at forensics to ascertain the physical abuse immediately after the violent incident and to bring this certificate right at the moment of admission in the shelter. Usually, it is difficult for professionals from the shelters to solve this problem after 2-3 days of residence, due to the mitigation of injuries and to the difficulty of caring for their young children while accompanying them at different institutions to get the necessary documents for court proceedings **(V1, psychologist, lines 125-131)**.

Professionals from victim support services identified a lack of psychosocial programs/ services for perpetrators. Although in the last years the judges prescribe psychological counseling sessions for perpetrators, this prescription cannot be implemented as this service is still not available.

*There are now state subsidizes psychotherapy programs for certain categories related to the medical act as a rule, but it would be very useful to provide such services for the category of abusers as well. So it would be something of a dream, because then they would no longer be able to claim that they don't have money, that they have all kinds of reasons **(V1, psychologist, lines 164-166)**.*

Professionals from victim support services claimed that media should be more involved in raising awareness on the phenomenon of violence and its negative impact on the wellbeing of families; also, the helpline number of ANES should be more advertised as a direct and rapid way of reporting cases of domestic violence **(V1, psychologist, lines 143-144)**.

*Romanians often ignore the screams of a woman on the street, the neighbor above, and somehow let's take responsibility as a nation to act proactively **(V1, psychologist, lines 145-146)**.*

Summary of Perpetrator Advisory Group

As part of the Perpetrator Advisory Group, two interviews were conducted with two men convicted by court for an act of violence against their partner, who are not incarcerated but are under the supervision of the Cluj probation service. The interviews were carried out face-to-face, at the headquarters of Cluj Probation Services Office. These two interviews had a short duration – 11, respectively 17 minutes – and it was quite difficult to keep the discussion focused on the interactions with police authorities, as the perpetrators were tempted to give details about their personal life experience that lead to being perpetrators of violence. Interestingly, one of them recognized his guilt and was reconciled to the idea of serving a punishment for his violent behaviour, while the other pleaded that he was in fact the victim in his life context that brought him in the position of a convicted person.

What works well

Both perpetrators appreciated they were treated very well in all the interactions they had with police authorities: when police came at the place of the incident to assess the risk of violence, when they were called at the police station for hearings, when police accompanied them at other institutions (e.g., in court, at the psychiatry clinic for emergency treatment for substance abuse).

He did his job as the police itself. ... You're wrong? That's it. ... They spoke nicely: What happened? How did it happen? Very ok. ... (The police officer) asked me why? For what? Why did you come here? I told him the cause itself, why (A1, lines 65-69).

Well, it was a very elaborate action, it was OK. I was not picked on, I was not assaulted. ... I also tried to help ... them too. And I cooperated, I was taken to the station, and ... nothing bad happened out of this. In the end I was wrong and I have to own my mistake (A2, lines 4-6).

(When he violated the protection order) ... I was taken to the ward again. Still the same procedure. I was not assaulted, nothing bad happened. The gentlemen were very nice to me, even offered me a horn and something to drink ... All I can say (it) was only good (A2, lines 34-36; 40). ... 3 male police officers and a young lady, the coolest police officers. Yes, we still kept in touch, we ran into each other around town ... Really, really nice gentlemen (A1, lines 43-45).

I have never been refused help when I asked, or asked for advice from the police, as happened now, with (my) case. So every time I was helped, if I asked, it was

really a very good interaction (A1, lines 69-71). ... I felt listened to, understood better than at a psychologist (A1, lines 77).

It was really a very, and for me shocking, operation. I didn't expect it to be like this, to be so good and to be treated so ok. I really didn't expect it, because I come from ... a city ... a little less developed ... and it's a little more difficult for me ... there, even if I walk down the street dressed like this and with tattoos, I'm stopped by the police (A2, lines 79-83).

What are challenges

Data collected from the two interviews with perpetrators did not reveal potential challenges. Perpetrators' experiences and perceptions about the police authorities permitted them to identify the strengths of police intervention and recommendations for improvement. Probably the number of perpetrators was too small to allow a more extended view on the challenges related to police interventions in domestic violence cases.

Recommendations for improvement

Both perpetrators expressed a similar suggestion for police authorities, that they should be involved in smoothing out couple tensions, to avoid escalating the conflict between couple partners. According to the aggressors' expectations, the police should intervene when couples argue and offer a kind of counseling to both partners, so that acts of serious violence be avoided:

So, not only that man who committed the act was to blame, but also the other one next to him, for what reason they got there and might not get there? I mean, like, to do counseling in the future. In the case of the police or so on. It's like you can't get here to ask a man... An NGO or as you say in this case, don't get there anymore. Is this family counseling? That counseling for I don't know gender, cohabitation or something like that, I don't know ... (for couples) ... which would help a lot. It would help a lot in Romanian society, in my opinion (A1, lines 160-166).

To act more often even if there are no acts of violence, because a small quarrel ... a small quarrel can lead to other acts of violence. So there should be more involvement when it comes to small scandals (A2, lines 122-124).

Summary of Police Advisory Group

A total of eight interviews were conducted with police officers working at Cluj County Police Inspectorate (Inspectoratul de Poliție Județean – IPJ Cluj – associate partners in this project - in different departments: Forensic Service; Criminal Investigation Service; The Legal Office; Office for Crime Analysis and Prevention; and proximity police. Four interviews were conducted at the headquarters of the Office for Crime Analysis and Prevention, with 5 police officers (3 individual interviews and 1 interview with two police officers), and the rest of 3 individual interviews were conducted online using the Microsoft Teams platform.

What works well

The respondents reported they use specific approaches when interacting with a victim of domestic violence, depending on the age, residential area, and level of education, specifically regarding the adaptation of language at the victim's level of understanding, when for instance, the police officers explain the terms they use in the official documents for the evaluation and management of domestic violence cases **(P8, lines 4-13)**.

Even if the interviewed police officers were not aware of the trauma-informed approach from the theoretical perspective, they use its principles in their daily practice. For instance, when possible, or in the most sensitive cases, a female police officer is referred to interact with the female victim and children exposed to violence, although the immediate intervention was made by the police officer on duty, regardless of their gender. Subsequently, for the following hearings, an attempt is made to call a female police officer; as well as when body control is necessary. If the collection of evidence and is not possible to be carried out by a female police officer, a female witness is trained to perform this procedure **(P8, lines 312-323)**. Victims and perpetrator are scheduled for different hearing times to avoid their interaction at the police station **(P6, lines 134-135)**.

There are plans to improve the cross-examinations/hearings of victims of domestic abuse in order to have a victim-centred approach. The Cluj County Police Inspectorate headquarters is planned to have one room dedicated exclusively to hearings, but even so, a single room will not be enough for all the criminal investigations, and a strict schedule will be necessary for a smoothness conduct of the hearings **(P6, lines 138-143)**.

Police officers recognized their need for training to improve their communication skills with victims of domestic abuse to offer an adequate response to trauma:

... It's extremely important to have tact ..., it's a role, so to speak, in which you have to enter very quickly, in a split second ... you don't have time to prepare for an hour to enter it ... it's a click. And that role must be managed very well. If you want your hearing to be effective, you have to be patient, although ... in

special cases, the police officer has to move very quickly to find out as much information as possible about the aggressor and so on, but you can't rush too much the victim, because she relives those experiences and then there is a tact here, which no matter how many courses you do, the experience prevails, I don't know (P8, lines 27-33).

When we first come into contact with them or immediately after an incident of domestic violence, we feel the state of anxiety and fears that they have and, most important is that they feel safe at that moment and then we try to adapt a little to the person we are interacting with, to calm them down, first of all, and then see exactly what they need. So, really, I can say that it's a little slower process, maybe, like in other hearings, because we have to provide her with that comfort (P7, lines 7-12).

There is a special room for child hearings - victims or witnesses of domestic violence. It is called AUDIS, and it is a friendly place, looking like a kindergarten, endowed with toys and equipment for recording and filming, so that the hearing is conducted only once, considering that repeated hearings could revictimize children. Usually, the hearings are asked from the prosecutors and are conducted by psychologists from DGASPC (P8, lines 273-285; P6, lines 15-20, 24-28).

In the last years, the legislation and technological equipment related to the response of police authorities in cases of domestic abuse have improved. For instance, at the beginning of 2024, in 5 different counties, a pilot program for monitoring perpetrators using the electronic bracelets started to be implemented. Consequently, a dispatcher was created to supervise the perpetrators using the electronic bracelets (P8, lines 340-342).

Also, to collect evidence from the place of the incident, and to facilitate a possible subsequent court trial, police officers can use the webcam they are equipped with (P7, 92-97). Another positive change in the legislation is the possibility to remove the perpetrator from home, if there is a threat to the safety and the security of victims, even if he is the owner (P7, lines 149-150; P6, lines 167-171).

At the level of Cluj County, some years ago, a working group was created at the inter-institutional level, in which police authorities, representatives of the main public institutions (DASM and DGASPC) and NGOs who offer social services for victims and perpetrators were involved. The members of this group meet every time to discuss emerging cases and when there is a need for a crisis intervention to ensure the protection and safety of victims. The collaboration with the NGOs is considered very important by the police authorities, as they can provide support services, especially psycho-social support for both victims and perpetrators. Police officers refer victims to support services, as the collaboration is more rapid and efficient than in case of collaborating with state-owned support services (P6, lines 87-99).

According to the police career guide, the new employees in the different structures of police will pass through a period of mentorship, in which they will benefit from professional experience of a tutor, a more experimented police officer. The purpose of this period is to facilitate the implementation of the theoretical training of the new employee toward the practical work of an experienced police officer. This transfer of know-how is realized by accompanying the police officer in his daily practical activities. **(P6, lines 113-128).**

Not only for the beginners, but for all the police officers working in the departments which have direct contact with the cases of domestic violence (the Public Order Service, the services and offices involved in criminal investigations), the process of continuous professional training is compulsory. This training can be done by individual study, or police officers can voluntarily enrol in different debates or presentations provided by the head of the professional training's group. The training sessions are organized periodically, and the themes are usually selected according to the learning's needs of the young police officers. Also, for the experienced police officers, periodical courses, information, seminars, debates are provided, where new or challenging topics are brought to attention **(P6, lines 175-184).**

What are challenges

The police department does have officers who work exclusively with domestic violence cases. In the urban areas, in case of a complaint, the patrol from the Public Order Service, which is on duty, is going to the place of an incident, where the minimum necessary procedures are accomplished. After that, in case of a complaint in court, the case is managed by the Criminal Investigation Service. If the court releases the protection order, the case is taken over by proximity police officers, who have the duty to monitor the perpetrator, checking if he respects the recommendations **(P8, lines 111-115; 221-226)**. In the rural area, the intervention of police is much more difficult, because there is a single patrol of two officers, who are responsible for all cases. In case of a domestic violence case, most frequently, one of the two police officers of the patrol remains at the place of the incident, where he/she has to conduct the risk assessment using a standardized risk assessment form, to issue the temporary protection order, to take the complaint and the statement after hearing the victim, as compulsory components of the victim's record. All these procedures are considered too long and dangerous for the remaining police officers as he/she has to work individually in case of another call **(P8, lines 123-138).**

Regarding the implementation of the program of electronic bracelets, police officers perceive the installation procedure quite cumbersome. The process of monitoring the perpetrators who hold bracelets falls on the responsibility of the police officers from the Public Order Service, and due to its experimental character, the success of this program is still under question **(P8, lines 374-376).**

A series of challenges are related to the interactions with victims of domestic abuse. Quite often, after the police officers expose and explain to a victim her rights, she refuses

some of them. A typical case is when a victim wishes to keep a distance from the perpetrator, but doesn't wish to interrupt all contacts, especially if they have children. Thereby, the perpetrator can continue to harass the victim by calling her or sending messages. If a victim doesn't ask to cease this communication with the perpetrator now of risk evaluation, this shortcoming is perpetuated at the trial, the abusive situation prolongs and it is necessary to initiate another lawsuit, on the grounds of harassment, which prolongs the situation of abuse **(P8, lines 155-172)**.

Also, victims still do not understand the importance of the psycho-social counselling; although they have this right, they do not use it, as they associate going to a psychologist with going to a psychiatrist. Police officers have the duty to inform the victim about such services, not to convince them about. Due to such misunderstanding, a lot of victims are deprived of specialized services, like psychological, judicial and social counselling **(P8, lines 176-190)**.

When children are involved in the domestic violence abuse, it is not possible to conduct an immediate hearing/counselling session by a specialized psychologist from DGASPC, because the access at the AURIS room is based on a schedule. Therefore, in most cases when there is an imminent risk of violence in the family, the hearing of minors has to be made by the police officer who addresses the case of domestic violence **(P8, lines 282-285)**.

Another problem is the lack of space in most police stations for conducting hearings respecting the confidentiality and integrity of victims and/or perpetrators. When a victim is coming at the police station for a hearing, to ensure the privacy of the discussion, the colleagues of the police officer who is responsible for the case are moving in another room during the period of the discussions. By this, the safety and comfort are ensured for the victim **(P7, lines 104-109)**.

The legislation mentions that a "mobile team" formed of a police officer and a social worker from the Department of Social Work of the local administrative territorial unit -, should go at the place where a complaint of a domestic violence incident is reported, but this structure is rarely activated. In most cases, the first authority who goes to investigate the incident is the police officer who also performs the risk assessment; then the social worker goes and meets with the victim and performs the complete risk and safety assessment.

The interviewed police officers recognized the utility of the temporary protection order for ensuring the safety of victims and appreciated which is easy to obtain under the current legislation. However, as people became more aware about this procedure, police officers' opinions is that, in some situations, it was used abusively **(P8, lines 355-368)**.

We've had situations ... usually these conflicts in marriage, especially these people who are going through a divorce, are taught by lawyers, whenever they feel that there is a discomfort, they ask for a protection order. (Police officers) will come, they will apply a risk assessment form (where they) have to answer (with at least 2 positive answers at the questions from 1 to 7, or with at least 6 positive answers at the questions from 8-21) it doesn't matter which, it is just counted, like the points from Monopoly. (The police officer) ... ticked them off,

he's bound to give you a protection order. It's not the police officer's job to determine whether it's true or false. He is only there to ask you whether you want (the temporary protection order) or not. You say you want to. For 5 days we take the man out, after which we see what we do. And if the court does not confirm, we took the other side out for 5 days, and there, sometimes it can be considered an abuse. And I was also talking with my colleagues, there are situations of couples who argue weekly or daily and basically report each other and you end up with a couple of 2 people for whom several police officers work on the risk assessment form. At least one police officer takes (this procedure) from start to end, after which, if there was also a domestic violence (act) involved, a slap, something, shoving, the person may also want to file a complaint. Then another police officer is involved, from criminal investigations (service), who will deal further with the prosecution file. In the following days, you find that the people have reconciled, (and) the protection order is basically cancelled. For them it's just a formality, they don't even go to court because they are not in the mood. And at the moment when the police are looking for them at home, (asking) why didn't you go to court, that the prosecutor called you to go there, that I did it for you. (They said) we made up last night. He came, told me he loved me, brought me a bouquet of flowers and that's good work. Over two or three days again and again. And this causes a kind of ... relaxation of the authorities, because if 20 times we have issued a protection order to a person and it has not been confirmed, maybe the 21st time, I'm not going to release it, because it's repetitive, but it is just at that time that (the real dangerous violent act) happens (P8, lines 74-94).

Risk Assessment/Case management tools used

Starting with 2018, the police officers must use the same standardised protocol for risk assessment when a complaint is made using a methodology issued for domestic violence case management. "The risk assessment form" is a questionnaire including 21 closed questions with dichotomic answers (yes/no) about the violent behaviours of the perpetrator and the victim's perceptions of her/his safety, aiming to identify an imminent risk of violence for the victim(s). After conducting the assessment, the interpretation of results is straightforward, and consequently it is easy for police officers to establish if the temporary protection order for a period of 5 days should be released. At the place of the incident, the police officers start drafting a file, including the rights of the victim, which are then explained to all parties affected by domestic violence.

The main strengths of this standardized instrument for risk assessment are that the questions and categories of answers are pre-established, so that police officers do not have to think which questions to ask; also, there is an easy interpretation of its results, and it is

clear if police officers can release or not a temporary protection order. Practically, this procedure decreases the pressure related to decision making in the evaluation of the imminent risk of domestic violence **(P8, lines 40-44)**.

However, the temporary protection order is not like a shield, as it cannot guarantee that the perpetrator keeps the distance from the victim. Police do not have a specialized structure to ensure the physical protection of each victim, like it is happening with the witness protection program for example. From this point of view, police officers still have a great responsibility for victims' safety during the temporary protection order, therefore police officers with more experience discuss with both parties the implications of the temporary protection order **(P8, lines 45-53)**. Sometimes, such discussions are necessary when a victim answers with "yes" to all questions from the risk assessment form but does not want a temporary protection order or when the perpetrator refuses to collaborate with police. There are situations when the perpetrators become aware about their obligations deriving from the protection order only when they are called at the police station **(P8, lines 53-63)**.

An adequate application of the procedure for risk assessment and release of the temporary protection order is time consuming. Usually, it takes approximately 3 hours for a police officer to complete the necessary documents and to explain their content to the involved parties. The risk assessment form should be self-completed by the victim, but in many cases, the victim doesn't understand the magnitude of her situation, and the police officer must resume it and to discuss in detail about each question, so that the real level of domestic violence is reflected in the form **(P8, lines 64-72)**.

There are clear steps followed by the police officers when a complaint of domestic violence is received by police: a) the evaluation of situation at the place of the incident by completing the risk assessment form; b) the release or not of the temporary protection order for 5 days; c) the completion of a report with the rights of the injured party, which are explained to the victim, independently on the release or not of the temporary protection order (e.g., the rights at psycho-social counselling and juridical assistance; the right to go to court; guided to shelters) **(P8, lines 185-188)**; d) the communication with the perpetrator about the protection order, his obligations, and the request of his home address; e) the creation of a file of victim which is transferred at the police of proximity, at the police station which will manage the case further **(P7, lines 57-77)**.

There is no protocol of case management for police officers. However, the police officers closely interact with other institutions and organisations to solve the cases. First, police officers must provide as much evidence as possible for the prosecutors, most frequently in a short time, as part of the process for releasing a protection order for 6 months. If victims decide to make a complaint in court for the extension of the protection order at 6 months, police help the court with the legal procedures. After the protection order is released, proximity police are responsible to monitor the perpetrators to respect the court decision.

The monitoring and recording of domestic violence cases is done by police only after a protection order for 6 months is released by court. These cases enter in the competence of

the Public Order Police Department. This structure holds a database with all active protection orders for monitoring **(P6, lines 154-164)**.

The last changes in the legislation permit a more rapid referral of victims to specialized social services. One relevant example regards the possibility the police officers must urgently removing the victim and, when it is the case, her children, from the house and accompany them to a protected shelter, where they are accommodated immediately, without the complex case evaluation of the local public institution of social protection (as it was in the past). At least for Cluj County, there is a very good cooperation between the police and the professionals from the two protected shelters for victims of violence of DGASPC (psychologists and social workers).

Data sharing challenges

Police officers pointed out they work under pressure for providing evidence to prosecutors. For the temporary protection order to be released, they must prepare all possible evidence in a very short time, of only a few hours. They have documented the case thoroughly, from proofs of the physical abuse captured in photographs to excerpts from electronic messages, and compile a file of evidence the prosecutors, that they usually ask for the next early morning. They must respect very strict rules related to the confidentiality of the collected evidence, and this procedure slows down the process of filling out the file for the prosecutor. Also, there is no uniformity in the way the prosecutors handle the domestic violence cases in the court. Therefore, the police officers must adapt to the personal style of working of prosecutors: there are some prosecutors who work very thoroughly and ask for many details from the beginning, others ask for proof as the process is unfolding **(P8, lines 139-151)**.

Police officers mentioned that there are two different instruments used by the police officer compared to the social worker for the risk assessment, and they consider that this form should be unified into one. The advantages would be the avoidance of data fragmentation and the accomplishment of a more complex and realistic evaluation at the place of the incident, at both levels of intervention - the social protection of victims and minors, on the one side, and the legal protection, on the other. Also, this common evaluation should be done once, by the “mobile team”, which would expose in a lesser extent the abused persons at the risk of revictimization, by repeating the risk assessment process **(P6, lines 33-45)**. In most cases, the police officer is the first authority who goes at the place of the incident to assess the imminent risk of domestic violence and to release the temporary protection order if needed, and after that a social worker is going at home/place of violence to evaluate the situation and to establish an intervention plan at the psycho-social level. Data sharing between the police authorities and social workers is even more difficult in the rural areas, as in Romania, there is only one employee with responsibilities in the social work field for each commune (more villages), and usually this person has a short training in social work and has

a lot of bureaucracy related to social protection of the disadvantaged individuals in the rural area and no specific training on domestic violence most of the times **(P6, lines 81-83)**.

Police authorities do not have an integrated information system with domestic violence cases, like, for example, the National Registry for Gun's Owners. The information is fragmented, as the information collected by different services or offices is not communicated to a structure responsible for their centralization. Therefore, it is impossible for the police officers to follow if victims make repeated complaints, but police officers mentioned that social workers should be responsible for the monitoring of this situation **(P4 & P5, lines 40-47; P8, lines 326-334)**.

In the year 2021, the Office for Crime Analysis and Prevention organised a panel dedicated to the issue of protection orders, where they invited the following stakeholders: Public Order Service, proximity police departments, case prosecutors, the 6 city polices of Cluj County, representatives from DGASPC and DASM Cluj-Napoca. During a week, in this joint meeting, there has been an exchange of information, and specialists from all fields tried to answer difficult questions related to daily police practice. Although successful, this event was time and resource consuming for the Office for Crime Analysis and Prevention and exceeded the responsibility of this structure. Such beneficial initiatives, however, should be taken up and implemented in the future by the new Professional Training Service, created two years ago **(P8, lines 234-257)**.

Recommendations for improvement

At the methodological level

There is a perceived need for improving the standardized tool for risk assessment. The questions from the risk assessment form are formulated in a too general manner; it should be improved in order to encompass manifestations of violence in other types of family relationships (for instance, the violent acts among previous partners in a consensual union, of an adult against his parents, violence between an uncle and a nephew, between brothers or cousins, the situation when the perpetrator is a minor, etc.); such situations are quite common, but they are not included in the risk assessment form supported by national law **(see P7, lines 31-34)**.

Also, the risk assessment form should evaluate the imminent risk of violence, but it lacks the possibility to frame in time the domestic violence acts; this is a limitation for police officers to get a deeper understanding on the context of violence in a family and to be able to help the victim accordingly **(see P7, lines 34-40, 151-153)**.

The interviewed police officers mentioned the need to have clear understanding and definitions to help them identify different levels of abuse and domestic violence, taking into account that the imminent risk is assessed exclusively by taking into account certain answers resulting from the completion of the risk assessment form.

For a better monitoring process and protection of victims, the police officers recommended the need for judges to include in their ruling, mandatory visits for the perpetrator at the police station periodically and/or for police officers to be able to make unannounced visits (**P7, lines 124-130**).

At the level of personnel

There is a need to increase the number of police officers for domestic violence case management, both in the urban and rural areas. For instance, at the level of Cluj municipality, respondents from the Criminal Investigation Service asserted it is very difficult to function with only two officers, and that for their volume of work, this service should have 5 employees (**P4, line 232**). In rural areas, a police station has 3 officers (a head of police station and a patrol of two police officers), regardless of the dimension and existing problems at the level of the local territorial administrative unit. So, in the most problematic rural localities, it is difficult to delegate to a single police officer the handling of the files related to domestic violence cases (**P8, lines 378-386**).

Regarding the process of monitoring the perpetrators who received a protection order through the electronic bracelets, the pilot program applied from 1 of January 2024 is implemented only in 5 counties, including Cluj. As it is a pilot project, the evaluation process is on-going. The interviewed police officers consider this program could ease their work, and recommend it for the national level.

The need to enforce the use of the “mobile teams”, which, according to law, should comprise a police officer and a social worker from the Department of Social Work of the town hall, who should go at the place of an incident at any time, to conduct a risk assessment and to develop an intervention plan.

There is also a great need to design social programs and services for the perpetrators. Although the law permits the removal of a perpetrator from their home, in most of the cases, he is unable to find a shelter and even harder to find psycho-social services for perpetrators. The situation is worse when the perpetrator is underaged, because there aren't specialized residential centres for this category of offenders (**P7, lines 155-157**).

The interviewed police officers mentioned that they did not participate in professional training programs or sessions focused on the particularities of the intervention in the cases of domestic violence (coercive control and behaviour of perpetrators; principal components of multi-agency collaborations; approaches to identifying repeat and vulnerable victims; evidence-gathering to support domestic abuse investigations, etc.).

Summary of Other Professional Advisory Group – optional

What works well

The Other professional Advisory Group is formed mostly from practitioners working in non-governmental institutions, some of them, administering women shelters or closely collaborating with women's shelters. The NGOs which have been active for a long time in the field of domestic violence provide support services for different categories of beneficiaries. For example, one NGO provides services to victims from disadvantaged families, including Roma people (OP5, lines 138-145), perpetrators and recently, refugees from Ukraine (OP4, lines 32-45). Consequently, the organization has three multidisciplinary teams, which use specific procedures in their interventions (OP1, lines 9-12). The team that addresses victims from Romanian disadvantaged families is the largest, including besides the psychologist and the legal expert, social workers, and a healthcare worker (OP1, lines 30-33).

When providing support services, NGOs know and use a *trauma informed approach*. They implement all the international recommended standards in their practice, but it is not clear if this perspective is generalized at the national level (OP2, lines 42-50). The manager of an NGO declared they call it *trauma informed care* (OP1, line 16). The manager of other NGO explained that their approach combines both the perspective of trauma and the perspective of gender. When they work with the beneficiaries, they explain the effects of violence from a trauma perspective and all the experiences that a person affected by violence can normalize through the counselling process. The physical and emotional effects of violence on children are also discussed, so that the beneficiaries have a somewhat broad understanding of the phenomenon itself. It is important the victims acknowledge that what happens to them is not separate from what usually happens in the cases of violence (OP4, lines 24-31).

Some NGOs developed special programs that aimed not only to overcome the traumatic experiences, but also to empowering women who survived violence to become more independent. This goal was achieved through counselling groups, which used different psychotherapy techniques (OP2, lines 12-17, 23-24). Through the Program "I can succeed it too!", communities of women confronted with violence are built and meet virtually, online, but also physically, in several localities in Romania (OP4, lines 15-17).

Intervention in the case of perpetrators is viewed differently by professionals, depending on the mission of each organization or institution. Some NGOs have distinct multidisciplinary teams for working with victims and perpetrators. For instance, in one NGO, the team for perpetrators is formed of a psychologist and a legal expert (OP1, lines 29-30) and different approach is employed in the work with perpetrators compared with that used in the approach of victims. Techniques of cognitive behavioral change are used to make the perpetrator accountable of his violent conduct, to take action to change it and to become able to control himself. This is a kind of counselling aimed at making the perpetrators more aware of the possible legal consequences of their violent behavior as well (OP1, lines 20-26). Another professional from a victim support service criticized the vision of the services for child and family protection of DASMs for adopting a perspective of mediation between the victim and

perpetrator. Or, in her opinion, the public institutions must also work from a gender perspective, from a victim safety perspective, and their role would be to hold the abuser accountable for his acts, not to mediate (OP4, lines 191-198). The chief of the Service of Child and Family Protection from DASM Cluj-Napoca explained that, during the risk assessment for domestic violence, they use rather a systemic approach, they do not remain focused only on the victim, but look at the family as a whole and work with all the parties involved in the situation: with mothers and children to ensure their safety and refer the perpetrator to a psychotherapist specialized in working with perpetrator or to a local addiction program when perpetrators have alcohol-related problems (OP5, lines 17-98).

All the interviewed professionals, either from NGOs or public institutions – some are social workers working in emergency departments – emphasized they have a very good collaboration with police authorities. This collaboration has different levels: first, in the case management; second, in the prevention of the phenomenon (OP4, lines 202-204); and thirdly, in the training of police officers to improve their intervention when dealing with victims and perpetrators. Practically, the representative of one NGOs stressed that, in the last 20 years of continuous activity, their professional team did not act in any case of domestic violence and in any information campaign in the community without the involvement of police authorities. This explains the fact that 89% of the victims who addressed the two support services offered by their organization (a counselling center and a women's shelter) have also asked for help from the police (OP1, lines 106-109).

The NGOs have systematically offered for police training sessions on the most sensitive topics related to the intervention in the domestic violence cases, such as: what violence means; how to identify the victims of domestic violence; how to register the cases; acknowledging the support services offered by these organizations. Such trainings allow a smoother approach of cases, an easier and more efficient intervention of the police officers (OP1, lines 109-118). In a program financed by UN Women and UNFPA, UNICEF Romania and ANES provided trainings about the standards of case management in the field of gender based violence, dedicated especially to the professionals from DGASPCs, DASMs and from private providers of social services (OP2, lines 81-85, 87-104).

There are NGOs which do not have the service delivery component; instead, they build capacities for the authorities, they cooperate with police officers, propose models of good practice for case management in the field of domestic violence (OP2, lines 78-81, 122-123).

In the last years, the professionals from NGOs and public institutions witnessed a continuous change in the mentality of police authorities. A lot of clichés and prejudices faded, and this improvement was the effect of the systematic training programs offered by the NGOs and of the improvements of the legal context regarding domestic violence.

There are definitely visible improvements ... we rarely encounter flagrant situations of sexist manifestations or expressions or obviously discriminatory attitudes. At least people have learned to control them better ... We can say that we also see at the level of effects, however, a change, no, undeniable. There are

many more protective orders issued by the police, many more police officers looking to get information and they consider us, yes, valuable partners. So, I say these are some good signs and let's say beyond appearances (OP4, lines 249-251, 253-257).

What are challenges

The interviews conducted with other professionals revealed similar challenges with those identified and described in the sections dedicated to victims (the views of the representatives from victims' support services) and police authorities.

There is a gap in the functioning of the mobile team in response to domestic violence cases. This team should include at least two professionals, a police officer, and a social worker from the local Department of Social Work. For the moment, at least in Cluj-Napoca municipality, the social workers called by police are those who provide counselling at the counselling center of DASM. This is inadvisable and counterproductive, because, first, it implies a role overload and, secondly, these professionals work for 8 hours, so they cannot guarantee the permanence of the interventions in their counselling center or/and outside their working hours, therefore, there isn't permanent support (OP5, lines 226-231).

Other challenges are related to parents' refusal to hospitalize the child when needed, this attitude putting the child's life in real danger. In such situations, the professional is caught between two contradictory laws, one related to the informed consent and that of child protection. The first gives priority to parents' decisions, and the latter focusing on the best interest of a child:

For example, it displeases me when a parent thinks he knows everything and refuses hospitalization, putting the child's life in real danger ... if ... child's health worsens until he gets to the hospital...but it's that Law 64, the informed patient law that gives the parent the right to interrupt the medical act or refuse admission. Law 472, the Child Protection Law, says that children must benefit or have the right to benefit from the best services, and they fight head to head (OP7, lines 125-129, 131).

At the Emergency Department for adults, the victims seek help for physical injuries from their partner. Sometimes, the medical staff is confronted with the presence of perpetrators when the conflict situation persists. When these men create conflicts and tensions at the hospital too, the medical staff use the panic button, and the public order police come and intervene urgently (OP8, lines 9-16).

A big challenge in the Romanian system of victims' protection is the instability of the network of social services, especially in the non-profit sector. The NGOs addressing the victims of domestic violence are scarce, concentrated in the big towns, and they are struggling to survive due to the precarity of financing. The townhalls usually are very resistant in supporting

such social services and, partly, this situation can be explained by the fact that the local councillors of the town halls are predominantly men, who do not want to recognize the phenomenon of violence against women and consequently, do not agree to dedicate financial resources to this matter. Therefore, private social services are usually financed from abroad, and when this financing finishes, they close their door, affecting the safety and psychological wellbeing of the survivors **(OP8, lines 117-122)**. This trend is noticed also in the public institutions, and most affected are services who provide shelters for victims. These shelters function for short periods and frequently there are syncope in providing this integrated form of support for victims and their children **(OP4, lines 145-146)**.

Despite significant improvements in the last years, it still exists situations when the law is not applied correctly, because of a wrong understanding of the phenomenon of domestic violence. Sometimes, the risk is perceived as small, because violence is normalized too much, and it is still tolerated in the society. Consequently, the procedures applied by police are not treated seriously, victims are not well informed about their rights. So, there still exists manifestations of sexism, discrimination by class, socio-economic status, and ethnicity **(OP4, lines 228-237)**.

The COVID19 pandemic negatively impacted the work with victims. During the restrictions' period, some social services closed their doors, and others have adapted at the new working conditions and have moved their counselling activities online **(OP2, lines 36-42)**. A gain of that period was that, both professionals and beneficiaries acquired new working skills in the online environment and were able to access remote social services **(OP4, lines 105-106)**.

In the Emergency Departments, social workers who meet victims of domestic violence in a critical situation perceive the need to have an updated map of public and private social services for victims. The core part of their counselling activity consists in the guidance and referral to the specialized social services, and their complaint is that they are not aware about the resources for victims in the local communities of the victims **(OP8, lines 174-182)**.

Risk Assessment/Case management tools used

The NGOs created their own standardized instruments for risk assessment, inspired by the international models of good practice. These instruments were pioneers in the field, being developed and used long before their legal regulation; moreover, some of these instruments were gradually integrated into the national legislation. For example, one NGO uses an instrument adapted from two international instruments: the 20-Item Danger Assessment (Campbell, Webster, and Glass, 2009) and the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) Guide, used by police officers in Sweden (Belfrage et al., 2012) **(OP1, lines 39-43)**.

Another NGO is a member of the WAVE network and had access at the trainings from the Projects PROTECT I and II. As a result, they use a risk assessment tool used in the UK. They translated the manual in Romanian and use it as a working tool when working with the victim and other professionals. They presented this resource to their partners during the training

sessions they organized, but do not know if other institutions or organizations use it in the risk assessment (**OP4, lines 49-57**). They also use, as part of risk assessment, The Power and Control Wheel (The Duluth Model, Minnesota), with the purpose of showing to the victim how a healthy relationship looks like and to understand the forms of violence. The equality and abusive relationship wheels, coloured in green and red, are analyzed in mirror, in order to identify and explain the perpetrator's behaviors (how he use the privileges of masculinity, the children as pawns), the social isolation, etc. In most cases, this discussion precedes the risk assessment so that the professional and victim have the same understanding about the context of violence (**OP4, lines 62-71**).

Always, the completion of the risk assessment is followed by the development of the safety plan (**OP1, lines 43-44**). Both the risk assessment and the safety plan are done together with the victim and both steps are part of the case management (**OP1, lines 50-52**).

Unlike the public institutions DASM and DGASPC, where the social worker is the case manager, in the NGOs, usually, this position is occupied by the psychologist, who is doing the immediate risk assessment of domestic violence, and the needs assessment, as part of the case's initial evaluation, followed by planning further steps for intervention (**OP1, lines 59-65**). The main public institutions – DASM and DGASPC – have standardized instruments which have been very recently included in the national legislation, in 2022, regarding the case management assessment in the social services intended to victims of domestic violence (OP5, lines 82-86).

A particular aspect of the case management in the field of domestic violence relates to the termination of the helping relationship for victims. The manager of an NGO explained that in this field, the relationship with the victim is opened until the death of the victim or of the perpetrator. Therefore, the file of the victim remains active in the records of the organization in the long run. A case can be considered temporarily closed if the perpetrator had no aggressive behavior in the last 5 years, or when the victim wants to end the professional relationship. Also, a case can enter in a stand-by status and is temporarily inactive – when the perpetrator is incarcerated – until he gets out of prison. In this last situation, the professional team reopens the case and prepares a safety plan with the victim for the perpetrator's return in the community. The case files of the victims served by the organization is very diverse and there are enough situations when, although the aggressor died or entered prison, the helping relationship continues, because the victim needs the psychological counselling as part of the long trauma healing process (**OP1, lines 214-235**).

After completing the stages of case management, some NGOs offer their beneficiaries the opportunity to continue the professional relationship, by involving them in group activities. One example is the Program "I can succeed it too!", where the survivors of violence can play different roles. As far as they overcome the danger and wish to help other victims by getting involved in support groups, they are not a beneficiary anymore, becoming a resource. This is a post-intervention stage of the professional relationship, a supportive medium in which the members discuss issues related to the ongoing harassment of the abusive partner, the matter of trust in a new couple relationship, the challenges of raising children alone. This kind of

intervention is a form of helping on the long run, by which the survivors receive from others and provide support others **(OP4, lines 90-101)**.

Data sharing challenges

In general, NGOs reported that the exchange of information with the police during the case management of domestic violence situations is rapid and efficient. The working methods used for data sharing are: face-to-face case management conferences, taking place at the headquarters of the organization, online meetings on WhatsApp, communication by telephone or e-mails. Regarding the conduct of hearings, police officers often come at the NGO, or when necessary, a professional from the organization accompany the victim at the police station **(OP1, lines 135-141)**.

A positive and unique example of good practice can be noticed in Mureş county, a neighbor of Cluj county, where each month, police officers from all the 112 police stations of the county meet with the professionals of the NGO to discuss the topic of domestic violence: what are the new problems; what new issues have to be solved; what are the new needs regarding the intervention of police. Those responsible for approaching such matters are the representatives of the NGO and of the Office for Crime Analysis and Prevention **(OP1, lines 144-151)**.

There is a general problem in the functioning of the so-called case conferences, where the most complicated cases of domestic violence should be discussed among the professionals from the social support services for victims. There is an inter-disciplinary team at the county level, coordinated by DGASPC. There are at least three kind of challenges related to these case conferences: a) they are summoned very rarely (one or two times in a year); b) when they take place, the general phenomenon of violence is discussed and not particular cases; so, in the vision of the professionals from NGOs, they should meet in these case conferences monthly and they should discuss the most sensitive cases and design together the individualized intervention plans **(OP4, lines 115-137)**; c) for the success of helping process for victims, the professionals perceived the importance of participation of prosecutors and judges, but until present, it was very hard to involve these legal actors in the case conferences meetings; also, police officers should be involved as partners, and by such implication, police authorities could better understand and monitor the most problematic cases of domestic violence **(OP4, lines 139-140, 204-210)**.

Recommendations for improvement

At support services level – either speaking about police or social services – there is a need for improving the quality of delivery: to have available and adequate support services; good working conditions for the professional staff; to have the necessary equipment; to promote clear procedures, in order to standardize and provide the same service no matter who

provides it and no matter to whom; to have an efficient management of information. All these issues imply consistent human and financial resources **(OP1, lines 248-254)**.

In this chain of needed developments, the elements which can be accomplished by the NGO in collaboration with police and the public institutions (especially the Departments of Social Work from each locality and DGASPCs) are trainings for professionals and improvement of procedures/ their extension at the national level. At present, the NGO from Mureș County is working together with ANES to establish the standardized procedures for the intervention in the cases of sexual violence and rape, and then, it will be extended for domestic violence too. Also, the training sessions for police officers should be continued and extended, because it is not enough to introduce good procedures in the legislation. To ensure an efficient intervention, police officers must be instructed how to apply the new instruments for risk assessment and case management **(OP1, lines 255-264)**.

*Training must always complement the implementation of a procedure. So, where I see our role, yours, anyone's, ... (as a) lobbyist, worker in this direction, is here – (the) training. Because training brings knowledge, because training elevates them (the police officers), (it) also increase their work skills and communication skills to change attitudes, and that's very important **(OP1, lines 264-268)**.*

The program of electronic bracelets for the supervision of perpetrators just emerged in Romania, and the victims are very resistant to accept this method implemented for their safety. Police declared that only 14% of the victims who were proposed to use this method agreed. This very low level of their wish can be attributed to the fact that the public in general is not aware of their utility and that the victims hear about this possibility only at the critical moment of violence when they are scared and frightened. The use of this method might be perceived as complicated and bureaucratic by victims, who must carry a different telephone all the time. Maybe they are not sufficiently informed about the benefits of this monitoring method. This issue should be solved by police together with the professionals from NGOs **(OP4, lines 213-225)**.

In the opinion of another professional, the improvement of the police intervention should be realized through a training process focused on the individualized intervention of the police officers, starting from the assumption that the use of risk assessment protocol is influenced by each one's system of prejudice, which must be dismantled through and the process of self-reflection; this approach would help police officers to get a better understanding of violence as phenomenon. It is not enough to release protection orders or to apply electronic bracelets; it is equally important to understand why violence and crimes committed in the family are increasing in intensity. When such reflexive processes are lacking, any law or the extensive use of electronic bracelets remains only punitive measures which are not unbeatable in the fight against domestic violence **(OP2, lines 196-208)**.

Summary of WP2 work activities

The main challenge of the process of data collection in Romania was a delay in conducting the interviews. The TACTICS team members had previous professional collaboration with the experts from the key institutions and organizations who activate in the field of domestic violence, but the process of getting the formal approval to conduct interviews with employees and beneficiaries of these agencies took longer time than expected and after the approval, we had to postpone some of the interviews until the professional was available to meet with the interviewer. Despite this difficulty, the research team managed to accomplish the required number of interviews for each of the four advisory groups.

The interviews conducted with other professionals enriched the perspectives got from the other three advisory groups and the collected data emphasized the need to develop a more comprehensive and holistic approach of domestic violence prevention and control. This development refers on the one side to an improvement of the functioning of the mobile teams, and on the other side, the necessity to harmonize the standardized instruments used by police authorities and social workers for risk assessment and intervention planning. Also, for a better monitoring of domestic violence cases by police authorities, the creation of a violence registry for documenting domestic violence at national level would be beneficial, especially for the situations of repeat callers as victims of domestic violence but also for designing services, prevention efforts and supporting research in this field. At present, data about domestic violence cases is not integrated in a registry system, and neither police, nor the institutions and organizations who offer social services for victims cannot track a case from the beginning to an end, each of them relies solely on the data they collect in their records, using their specific tools.

A clear conclusion from the analysed data is that the intervention in the cases of domestic violence has been significantly improved in the last years, both with regards to the police intervention and the social services for victims. However, the social services and programs for perpetrators are very scarce and there is no perspective on the short or medium term that this deficit will be addressed in any way.

Although not all the participants at the four advisory groups agreed to remain part of the advisory panel during the TACTICS project, all the interviewed members of these groups were excited by the purpose of the project and considered very useful the idea that police could improve its intervention for management of domestic violence cases based on this research. The interview participants were very open and gladly accepted to share with us their experiences and opinions, a fact for which the research team was very grateful to all of them!

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guides and Ethics Approval

Appendix 2: Copy of Order no. 146/2578/2018 (domestic violence case management by the police) and risk assessment tool police officers use when responding to cases, present in the same Order; the 2022 activity reports of the Romanian Police and of the National Agency for Gender Equality between Women and Men

Appendix 3: Cluj County Police Inspectorate Activity Report for 2022